



Lander Region Newsletter

Serving Dubois, Rawlins, Riverton, Lander, and places between

March 2015

Volume 3, Issue 3

Wolverine Research



Above: wolverine detected on trail camera in the southern Absarokas; far above: wolverine habitat in the Absarokas; below: Wolverine Initiative volunteer Mark Packila skiing into a monitoring site in the Wind River Mountains. Photos courtesy of Meghan Riley.

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Starting in February, Wyoming Game and Fish and collaborators from the Wolverine Initiative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Shoshone, and Northern Arapaho Tribes began fieldwork on a wolverine monitoring project in northwestern Wyoming. Basic information about population distribution and presence of reproductive females is lacking, yet significant areas of suitable habitat exist in Wyoming's western mountains. Biologists receive reports of wolverine sightings periodically, but no systematic survey of the area has occurred previously. Given ongoing federal listing questions, information on wolverine



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Reptiles and Amphibians - of the lander region

Statewide Herpetological Coordinator Charlotte Snoberger led a training on reptile and amphibian identification at the Lander regional office. Around thirty people attended the training, including professionals from the Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Outdoor Leadership School. Charlotte educated the group on identification by sight and sound

of species possibly found in the Lander Region. See some examples below.

If you have any reptile or amphibian related questions or are interested in how you can help collect observations, please contact Charlotte Snoberger at 307-233-6402.

Victoria Zero, another herpetologist with Game and Fish, will be conducting reptile and amphibian surveys in the Lander Region over the next two years. Please contact her at 307-473-3432 if you have any interesting sightings in the area or

ducting reptile and amphibian surveys in the Lander Region over the next two years. Please contact her at 307-473-3432 if you have any interesting sightings in the area or

Visit Herptologist Victoria Zero at Wyoming Outdoor Weekend and EXPO.

Sat, June 27 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm,
Lander Community Center



Plains hog-nosed snake



Plains spadefoot toad



Eastern yellow-bellied racer



Greater short-horned lizard



Northern rubber boa



Common garter snake



Milk snake



Northern leopard frog



Boreal chorus frog



Habitat - ocean lake burn



Burning cattails at Ocean Lake Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

Derek Lemon coordinated a multi-agency prescribed fire effort at Ocean Lake Wildlife Habitat Man-

agement Area, north of Riverton. Derek, with substantial assistance from Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

and Midvale/Pavillion volunteer fire crews burned areas adjacent to Pond 6 at Ocean Lake.

The burn was complicated due to the location of structures on neighboring land, however the fire crews conducted a flawless burn. In addition to local Lander and Fort Washakie based fire crews, fire personnel and equipment from as far away as Worland and Cody helped conduct the burn.

This is the third consecutive year that Derek has coordinated burns at Ocean Lake. The goal is to remove decades of accumulated cattails around the ponds east of Ocean Lake. Burning the cattails creates greater vegetative diversity which benefits migrating waterfowl and shore birds.

We greatly appreciate all the hard work from the BLM, USFS and local volunteer fire crews!

New Employee



Tasha Lewis joined the Game and Fish team as a clerical specialist this past March. Her position is largely responsible for customer service and managing the Game and Fish store, which received a makeover so be sure to stop by and check out her hard work. Tasha's background in customer service and sales makes her a great asset to the Lander Region. Tasha is from Riverton, Wyoming and enjoys the outdoors, especially camping with her family. She is an aspiring fisherman and has caught 4, maybe 5 fish in her fishing career thus far. Make sure to stop in the Lander regional office and say hello to Tasha.



Forever Wild - working with partners



Pictured above Wyoming Catholic College freshmen on a chukar hunt at Ocean Lake Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

Game and Fish worked together with Wyoming Catholic College on a Forever Wild Student Week. Forty-two college freshmen attended the two day hunter education/range classes and finished their experience with a chukar hunt at Ocean lake Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

Help was received from all divisions within Game and Fish as well as numerous outside volunteers, including many four-legged helpers. The Wyoming Catholic College obtained a Chapter 10 permit for the chukars and purchased the birds from George

Cassel in Riverton. George delivered the birds each day and returned after each event to see how everyone did. Thanks George!

Some students came into the experience being unsure of hunting, but in the end all students passed and decided to participate in the chukar hunt.

Quotes from students:

"Exciting, inciting and well worth the rewards!" - *Alena Souza*

"I enjoyed the program and now feel competent and safe around firearms. Thank you!" - *Elizabeth Meluch*

"When I was told my class would get to spend a day at the range and hunt chukar, I was thrilled! Thanks to the awesome people at the Game and Fish, my friends and I had an incredible experience. This is something every school should be able to do." - *Joshua Zimmer*



Bighorn sheep - research on whiskey mountain



Pictured above and below: Game and Fish staff and volunteers help capture, sample, collar and release bighorn sheep on Sacajawea Ridge on the Wind River Reservation.

In March, live updates from ungulate research across the state were available through Twitter. Tweets were provided by Game and Fish staff and Matthew Kauffman with the UW Cooperative Unit.

Be sure to follow us on Twitter for your up to the minute news.



twitter.com/wgfd

Efforts to better understand challenges the Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep face with regard to population growth, disease, low lamb production and recruitment continues. In March, Lander Region personnel, volunteers, Wind River Tribal Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel assisted Kevin Montieth and others

from the University of Wyoming to capture, collar, disease test and assess individual body condition on twenty bighorn sheep ewes.

Bighorn sheep were captured on Sacajawea Ridge, Torrey Rim and Sheep Ridge. They were all fitted with GPS/satellite collars that will provide detailed movement and habitat use data over the next six

years. These sheep will provide researchers and managers information about their body condition twice a year (each will be captured and re-assessed late fall and early spring) for the next three years. This information will be compared with their pregnancy status, their lambs' survival, and disease status to see if body condition/nutrition is related to these factors.



The ages of the ewes captured ranged from two+ to greater than fifteen years old, and all but two were pregnant. This effort over the next several years will provide a lot of valuable information and the Game and Fish is appreciative of the work the University of Wyoming Cooperative Unit and all the others involved have contributed to make the beginning of this project a success!



Wolverine's, cont'd from pg. 1

population status in Wyoming is of particular interest to wildlife managers.

In Wyoming, wolverine habitat occurs at high elevations, often in designated wilderness. This rugged terrain can be challenging to access in winter, but biologists have set up remote cameras and hair snags to collect DNA samples at eighteen sites in the Salt River, Gros Ventre, Absaroka and Wind River mountain ranges. Monitoring sites will remain active into May as females begin ranging farther from their den sites, but the project has already logged

one wolverine detection in the southern Absarokas.

Additional sites will be monitored in the second year of the project, during winter and spring of 2015-16.

Funding was generously provided through general funds from the Wyoming state legislature. More information and updates on the project can be found at the Wolverine Initiative website: www.gulos.org.



Wolverine Initiative volunteer Mark Packila hanging bait at a wolverine monitoring site. Photo courtesy of Meghan Riley.

Large Carnivores - bears are out



The bear awareness booth won first place! Congratulations to all who helped across fish and wildlife divisions in making this a success.

For many bears in Wyoming the active season has begun. This should be a reminder for us all to be cognizant of what can be done to reduce the likelihood of having a surprise encounter

with a bear. Springtime bears are sometimes observed at lower elevations, depending on snowpack, searching out quick and easy nutrients and working out the kinks of a long winter's sleep.

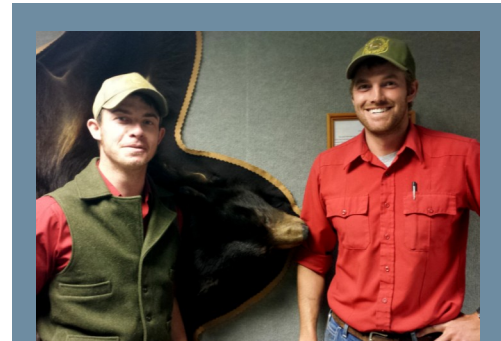
with a bear.

Springtime bears are sometimes observed at lower elevations, depending on snowpack, searching out quick and easy nutrients and working out the kinks of a long winter's sleep.

With bears out, large carnivore employees have been ramping up Bear-wise education efforts. If you missed some of these efforts and need

Also, **you can help us** by reporting any grizzly bear sign or activity to Game and Fish personnel, and by spreading the word of awareness.

Lastly, Lander Region welcomes back two large carnivore seasonal employees: Colby Clark and Clint Atkinson. Seasonal employees are often the life blood of the work crew. These two will help primarily with bear trapping over the next several months. When you see them across the state this summer in the mountains, trails, roads or regional offices, make sure to say hello.



Seasonal employees, Clint Atkinson (left) and Colby Clark (right).



Sage Grouse - leks counts and executive order review



Sage grouse on West Long Creek lek this spring. Photo by Stan Harter.

Sage grouse lek monitoring began in mid-March in the South Lander Wildlife Biologist District.

So far, lek attendance has increased significantly compared with 2014, with a 71% increase at a sample of nineteen leks. Male attendance has already doubled last year's attendance at some leks, and some are near or above all-time high male counts. Male attendance at leks often increases in late-April, and the number of male sage grouse at leks is likely to increase over the next few weeks.

In addition, many new areas have been discovered with strutting males, for a potential of six to ten new leks discovered. Follow up visits will be conducted to confirm these are indeed new leks.

This increase in lek attendance is due to greater chick numbers over

the last year (1.7 chicks/hen in the Lander Region in 2014). However, most leks are still well below peak numbers observed in 2006.

Preliminary reports are showing increases across the state, with Colorado and Idaho reporting increases as well. A more complete summary of Lander Region 2015 lek monitoring will come in newsletters in April and/or May.

In the meantime, the Governor's Wyoming Sage Grouse Implementation Team (SGIT) is making recommendations for changes to the Governor's Sage Grouse Executive Orders based on new sage grouse and human development. Both the sage grouse core area map and the regulatory framework associated with the Executive Orders have been in the process of review and public comment with recommendations

due to the Governor by May 31.

Game and Fish Sage Grouse Program Coordinator Tom Christiansen was appointed by the SGIT to head a sub-group charged with analyzing the current core areas boundaries and gathering input from the eight local sage grouse working groups. Game and Fish Sage Grouse GIS Analyst, Nyssa Whitford, is providing GIS and mapping products for the purpose of determining where new information may indicate changes are warranted.

**“ ... A 71% INCREASE
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Fishing Report

Ocean Lake

Walleye numbers in Ocean Lake are currently below average. Weak year-classes in 2012 and 2013 are the causes of the low walleye numbers. The weak 2013 year-class can be explained by the cancellation of 2013 stocking, which was necessary to prevent the introduction of rainbow smelt that were found in walleye rearing ponds in North Dakota. Cannibalization by the strong 2011 year-class likely contributed to the weak 2012 year-class. Although walleye numbers are currently below average, the strong 2011 year-class (age-4 fish) should still result in decent fishing in 2015. Age-4 walleyes in Ocean Lake should be 16 to 18 inches long this year.

Boysen Reservoir

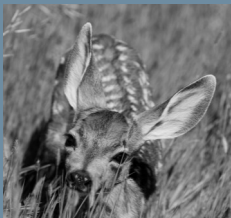
Walleye numbers are increasing in Boysen Reservoir, which hopefully will lead to good walleye fishing in 2015. Most of the walleyes are age-4, and should be 18 to 19 inches in length by the end of the summer. Knowing the difference between a sauger and a walleye will be especially important for anglers this year because of the high number of age-4, 16- to 18-inch saugers currently in Boysen Reservoir. The creel limit on saugers in the Wind River drainage is two, whereas six walleyes can be harvested daily or kept in possession. Rainbow trout abundance has been increasing in Boysen Reservoir and fishing should be good this coming year. The rainbow trout fishery is maintained by stocking 50,000 to 60,000 rainbow trout annually.

Miscellaneous

Because of below-average snowpack, anglers will likely be able to access most Wind River Mountain lakes by early July. The below-average snowpack will also cause most streams to clear earlier than normal, with most streams fishable by mid- to late June.



Sauger with hand model, Colby Clark



**Lander/Green Mtn. Mule Deer Working Group meeting on April 20 at 6:15 PM, Lander regional office, 260 Buena Vista Dr.
Open to the public.**

Need HELP Applying Online?

We will be available to assist you :

- Dubois, May 1 from 10 am - 2 pm at the Dubois Library, 202 North 1st St.
- Rawlins , May 14 from 3 - 7 pm at the Rawlins Library, 215 W. Buffalo
- Or anytime Mon-Fri, 8-5 in the Lander regional office, 260 Buena Vista Dr.

*Please come ready with the last four of your social security #, your application areas/species picked out, and your credit card. For questions call 307-332-2688.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
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